

December 15, 2025

Interfaith Letter to Gov. Hochul: Sign the Jail and Prison Oversight Omnibus Bill into Law *Without Changes*

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of faith-based organizations, congregations, and networks across New York state, we write to urge you to immediately sign the Jail and Prison Oversight Bill [S.8415](#) (Salazar)/[A.8871](#) (Dilan), into law without any changes. This oversight bill consists of ten jail and prison oversight and accountability reforms, including overhauling the failing State Commission of Correction.

Our faiths teach us to reach out to the marginalized and the imprisoned. Our faiths teach us that incarcerated people are still our brothers and sisters. We believe in redemption and restoration. No one should be judged solely on the worst decision they ever made, and most people in local jails are still legally innocent and awaiting their day in court. We condemn the rampant abuse and the use of violence and solitary confinement within our local jails and state prisons.

We have come together across lines of religious, cultural, political, and geographic differences, in the pursuit of a more just and safe criminal legal system for all incarcerated people and those who work there. Our faith compels us to preserve human dignity and to treat everyone with compassion and care. In 2025, it became clear that many jails and prisons across New York are plagued by human rights crises, terrible conditions, medical neglect, gross mismanagement, extreme violence, and routine constitutional violations.

The gruesome killings of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi by correctional officers at Marcy and Mid-State Correctional Facilities underscore the deadly and dangerous conditions incarcerated people face in New York state prisons. The recent New York Times [investigative report](#) about the crisis in our state prisons further highlights systemic oversight failures and accountability lapses.

Local jails are no different. In New York City, the Rikers Island jail complex has a long and well-documented history of torture, abuse, violence, and a lack of safety for both incarcerated people and staff. The jails in Albany, Greene, Dutchess, Suffolk, and Onondaga counties, and also many others, consistently put incarcerated people at grave risk of harm without consequences.[i]

The State Commission of Correction (SCOC) is an independent body mandated with the constitutional authority to ensure that correctional facilities across New York – all local jails and state prisons – are “safe, stable and humane.”[ii] The commission also has the power to shut down correctional facilities found to be out of compliance. But for more than 20 years[iii] the

SCOC has consistently failed to meet its responsibility. Section H of this omnibus bill includes provisions aimed at fixing the SCOC by bringing greater accountability so that it meets its mandate with regard to jails and prisons throughout the state.

We call on you, Governor Kathy Hochul, to take action to protect incarcerated people and save lives by immediately signing the Jail and Prison Oversight Omnibus bill into law with no changes. Our faith compels us to speak out, and ensure everyone in our community, especially those who are incarcerated, are treated with dignity and care.

Let there be no more deaths, no more beatings, no more brutality against helpless incarcerated men and women. And let us ensure that incarcerated people have the opportunity to be redeemed and to return to their homes, their marriages, their families, and their communities.

Sincerely,

List of faith congregations, organizations, networks, and groups

[i] New York State Commission on Correction. *The Worst Offenders Report: The Most Problematic Local Correctional Facilities of New York State*. February 2018.
<https://scoc.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/09/problematic-jails-report-2-2018.pdf>

[ii] NYS Commission on Correction. “About the Commission of Correction.” New York State.
<https://scoc.ny.gov/about-commission-correction>

[iii] Eliza Fawcett. “This Agency Is Supposed to Monitor Jails. Is Anyone Monitoring It?” New York Focus. December 18, 2023.
<https://nysfocus.com/2023/12/18/new-york-jail-prison-correction-scoc>