



FACTSHEET

OVERVIEW OF THE 2025 REFORMS TO THE STATE COMMISSION OF CORRECTION

BACKGROUND

The SCOC is an independent body mandated with the constitutional authority to ensure that correctional facilities across New York – all local jails, state prisons, and juvenile detention facilities – are “**safe, stable and humane.**”¹ The SCOC has wide-ranging power to hold these facilities in compliance, including the ability to conduct inspections, obtain information from any staff, examine any documentation and medical records, issue subpoenas, and obtain state Supreme Court orders. The SCOC also has the power to shut down correctional facilities (including local jails like Rikers Island) found to be out of compliance with maintaining a “safe, stable, and humane” environment for the people incarcerated there. Under the SCOC also falls two sub-committees: the Medical Review Board, and the Citizens’ Policy Complaint and Review Council.

The SCOC was first established in 1898. In the wake of the events at Attica in 1971, the SCOC was overhauled through legislative reforms and a constitutional amendment.² But the potential for the SCOC to be a truly effective oversight body were immediately thwarted by opponents in the legislature, and the SCOC has consistently failed to meet its responsibility ever since.³ Incarcerated people across New York have suffered the consequences as a result.

For years, community groups have fought to overhaul the SCOC and hold it accountable to its mandate. In 2024, Robert Brooks was brutally murdered by officers at Marcy Correctional Facility. Months later, in 2025, Messiah Nantwi was killed by officers at Mid-State Correctional Facility. In the wake of these deaths, and under pressure from a growing statewide coalition calling for reform, numerous reforms to overhaul the SCOC were passed in 2025.

THE 2025 REFORMS TO THE SCOC

During the 2025 legislative session, two separate reform packages were passed. The first was passed in April 2025 as part of the state budget process. The second was passed in June 2025 as part of the larger Omnibus Jail and Prison Oversight bill.⁴ Together, these changes reflect many of the demands made by the statewide coalition demanding an overhaul to the SCOC.

REFORMS INCLUDED IN THE FY2026 BUDGET

PASSED APRIL 2025

- **Mandating** the SCOC conduct annual inspections of every state prison, local jail, and juvenile detention center
- **Requiring** more accessible grievance procedures, including the creation of a web-portal for families to submit written complaints (the online complaint portal is now live)
- **Expanding** authority for the SCOC to conduct private interviews of correctional employees, accompanied by counsel or union representative; and private interviews of incarcerated individuals upon the individual’s consent

- **Requiring** that investigations, recommendations and reports to the SCOC from the Medi Review Board or the Citizens Review Council about the delivery of medical care must be included in the SCOC's annual report
- **Increasing** the SCOC budget by \$3million over the previous year, to \$7.1 million.

REFORMS INCLUDED IN SECTION H OF THE OMNIBUS PACKAGE

PASSED JUNE 2025 AND SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR HOCHUL IN DECEMBER 2025

- **Expanding the Number of Commissioners:** The Commission is expanded from three to five members. These are paid positions. The two new members are part-time; they hold full voting rights on the commission. The governor makes the appointment, but all the appointments must go through Senate confirmation. This gives directly impacted people and community groups a chance to weigh in during the process.
- **Commissioner Requirements:** New requirements expand the diversity of perspectives and experiences: At least one commissioner (full time or part time) must be a formerly incarcerated individual. At least one commissioner (full time or part time) must be one of the following:
 - a health care professional;
 - an attorney with a background in indigent criminal defense, prisoner's rights litigation or experience as a legal policy professional with experience related to the rights of incarcerated people;
 - or a professional with experience in any other field deemed relevant to the promotion of an efficient, humane, and lawful correctional system.

The effective date for the two new part-time commissioners is May 9, 2026. Additionally, there is currently a vacancy for a full-time commissioner. Thus, three new commissioners must be appointed.

¹ NYS Commission on Correction. "About the Commission of Correction." New York State. <https://scoc.ny.gov/about-commission-correction>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/08/13/archives/correction-bill-signed-by-carey-advocate-of-prisoner-rights-to-head.html?searchResultPosition=3>

³ 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>

⁴ The Omnibus package is [S.8415 \(Salazar\)/A.8871 \(Dilan\)](#), which consists of ten prison oversight and accountability bills. The part of the Omnibus bill reform the SCOC is Section H. Before being added to the Omnibus package, the SCOC stand-alone proposal was [S.856 \(Salazar\)/A2315 \(Gallagher\)](#).

NEXT STEP

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR SWIFT, EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS TO THE SCOC. THE GOVERNOR MUST APPOINT REFORM-ORIENTED COMMISSIONERS WHO WILL WORK TO AGGRESSIVELY MEET THE SCOC'S MANDATE AND ADDRESS THE CRISES UNFOLDING IN JAILS AND PRISONS ACROSS NEW YORK.

For more information about the reforms to the State Commission of Correction and to get involved in implementation efforts, please contact Yonah Zeitz at yonah@katalcenter.org or 347-201-2768.

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