

Senator James Seward
41 So. Main Street
Oneonta, NY 13820

Dear Senator Seward:

As citizens and voters in your district, we are very concerned with the prolonged use of solitary confinement in our state's prisons and jails. We have written to the Governor and the officials in Public Safety and Department of Corrections but we want you, our elected representative, to know we are profoundly opposed to the torture of solitary confinement being used in our names in New York State.

Solitary confinement is ineffective, costly, counterproductive, unsafe, and inhumane. Despite these facts, New York utilizes isolated confinement at rates well above the national average.

People in solitary spend 22-24 hours a day locked in a small cell. The sensory deprivation, lack of human interaction, and extreme idleness can lead to intense suffering and severe psychological damage. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture denounced solitary confinement exceeding 15 days. Yet, many people in NYS serve months or years or even decades in solitary confinement.

An average of 4,200 people are in solitary confinement in NYS prisons on any given day. Another 1,000 people are in solitary confinement in NYC jails. Children and people with mental illness fare even worse in solitary confinement yet they are disproportionately likely to end up there.

The ostensible purpose of solitary confinement is for the safety of the prison and inmates. And yet, states that have reduced the use of solitary confinement have documented less prison violence. We cannot hope to help people change for the better by isolation and deprivation.

Please respond to people in prison with programs, therapy, and support so they can become productive, contributing citizens.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Signature