

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



GEORGE M. BORRELLO  
SENATOR  
57TH DISTRICT

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February 24, 2021

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Mr. Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner  
New York State Department of Corrections  
& Community Supervision  
Building No. 2, State Office Campus  
Albany, NY 12226

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Annucci,

I am requesting an immediate pause on the closure of Gowanda Correctional facility, due to the failure of the state to provide a cost-benefit analysis that shows the closure would result in savings.

During the February 10<sup>th</sup> Joint Budget Hearing on Public Protection, I stated that multiple FOIL requests have been submitted seeking the analysis behind the state's contention that closing Gowanda, and two other DOCCS facilities, will save \$89 million. However, DOCCS has provided no clarity on why those FOIL requests from the Gowanda Area Redevelopment Corporation cannot be answered until April 2, after Gowanda Correctional is closed.

We have also become aware of the following:

- Millions of dollars in construction projects were reportedly approved for Gowanda Correctional prior to the closure announcement. These projects include roof replacements for certain buildings and new windows. These contracts will have to be honored, even though the facility will be empty. Were these expenses factored into the cost-benefit analysis?
- Because a portion of the heat for neighboring Collins Correctional comes from Gowanda, a major heating upgrade will likely be necessary at Collins. Similarly, Gowanda houses the pharmacy and infirmary that service both Gowanda and Collins. With Gowanda closed, the construction of similar departments is being planned for Collins.

Altogether, construction costs for the above projects could reach into tens of millions of dollars. Have all of these factors been included in the financial analysis?

These questions, coupled with the lack of transparency surrounding these closures, illustrate the drawbacks of allowing an expedited 90-day closure window. Rushed decisions, made behind closed doors and with incomplete information, typically end up being poor decisions. There is simply too much at stake in this situation to allow for anything less than a thorough and transparent process. That is why I believe pausing the process is justified.

Closing Gowanda Correctional will have a devastating economic impact on the community, at a magnitude that will likely exceed any cost savings. It's a decision that shouldn't be made in haste, and one that requires full public disclosure of the costs and benefits involved.

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George M. Borrello". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George M. Borrello  
57<sup>th</sup> Senate District