



SCOTT A. GRAY
Assemblyman 116th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
Committee on
Tourism, Parks, Arts and
Sports Development

COMMITTEES
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Health
Higher Education

Governor Kathy Hochul
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

January 20, 2024

Honorable Governor Hochul,

I am writing to you as the representative of the 116th Assembly District, where my constituents and I find ourselves in a precarious situation concerning the proposed round of closures for five correctional facilities. Having already withstood the significant socioeconomic impact of two previous prison closures, our local families and economy are still grappling with the aftermath. The repercussions have been profound, and the communities I serve have reached a culmination of family relocations and vacant properties.

The 116th Assembly district contributed ample part to the state's initiatives to reduce the prison facilities with the closures of WCF in Watertown and OCF in Ogdensburg. It is essential to acknowledge the toll these closures have taken. The shuttering of facilities has left indelible marks on our local economy and the psyche of those who have dedicated their lives to New York's correctional services. The 116th Assembly district is the home of two massive decommissioned prisons that stand as stark reminders of these sacrifices, lying dormant and devoid of any activity to repurpose them for community benefit. The communities spend an excessive amount of time trying to figure out what is next for those properties, yet lack any control.

I write to you today to request a pardon from the planned closure of any prisons in the 116th Assembly district. The rationale for this request is not solely based on past experiences but also on the inherently unfair 90-day window allotted for these closures. Such a brief timeframe is grossly inadequate for families to adjust to the upheaval of their lives — splitting family units temporarily, selling homes, transferring school enrollments, and securing new employment in unfamiliar territories are tasks that cannot be accomplished equitably within three months. Moreover, the ancillary businesses that have grown around these correctional facilities are integral to our local economy. From gas stations and diners to grocery stores and barber shops, these enterprises will suffer considerable losses, with a ripple effect extending far beyond the immediate vicinity of the prison.



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The collective burden of these factors cannot be overstated, and I urge you to consider everything stated above, especially the human element at the core of this decision. We have indeed paid our dues to the prison closure process, and I implore you to recognize the heavy price the people of the 116th Assembly district have already paid.

We were promised a year ago that an RFI would be issued for these facilities and have heard nothing more. Our communities are prepared to work on redevelopment, whether for mental health services, treatment facilities, or housing, if a determined need exists. The people of the 116th Assembly district want better, deserve better, and are prepared to work for better. As their representative, I am eager to work with your office and relevant state agencies to find alternative solutions and help repurpose our existing vacant facilities in a manner that revitalizes our local communities and economy.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue that prioritizes the well-being of our constituents. Thank you for being so considerate, and I am hopeful for a favorable response.

Warm regards,

Scott A. Gray
NYS Assembly Member
116th District