

**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY**

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**I'm Just
Collateral
Damage**

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The Human
Cost of an Illegal
Prison Strike



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About

The Prisoners' Rights Project



The Prisoners' Rights Project is a leading advocate of humane and constitutional conditions in the New York State prisons and New York City jails. The Project seeks to dismantle the oppression and racism of the carceral system by protecting the safety and basic human rights of the people who are subjected to it. Since its

establishment in 1971, the Prisoners' Rights Project has been at the forefront of litigation and advocacy to improve the conditions and treatment of people incarcerated in New York State prisons and New York City jails and reform the laws governing the treatment of people during incarceration.

REPORT

"I'm Just Collateral Damage": The Human Cost of an Illegal Prison Strike

When Department of Corrections and Community Supervision ("DOCCS") uniformed staff walked off the job in mid-February 2025, the strike stretched over dozens of prisons and included as many as nine out of ten DOCCS staff.¹ The harmful impact on people in DOCCS custody was, and continues to be, enormous.

At the time this report is published, Governor Hochul and DOCCS leadership have reported an end to the strike.² But not only do conditions in many facilities remain inhumane, and people in custody face retaliation from staff forced back to work—we must understand the human cost of the strikes, paid by people that New York State incarcerates and those who love them. Nine people died while staff left their posts.³ Still more people suffered.

The strike resulted in a flood of calls to our office from people stuck within this prison system in crisis. The people calling us were scared, in pain, and desperate.

They called from facilities all over New York: Albion, Auburn, Attica, Bare Hill, Bedford Hills, Cape Vincent,

Cayuga, Clinton, Collins, Coxsackie, Eastern, Elmira, Fishkill, Five Points, Franklin, Gouverneur, Green Haven, Greene, Groveland, Marcy, Mid-State, Mohawk, Orleans, Riverview, Shawangunk, Sing Sing, Upstate, Wallkill, Washington, Wende, Woodbourne, and Wyoming. Their loved ones called us, too. We received hundreds of calls: many dozens about medical care denied, about mental health needs ignored, numerous complaints of missed meals and inedible food, people who wanted to see the sun or do a program or talk to other human beings.

Many people who called us were afraid for their stories to be told, but twenty-four gave us permission to use their words so that people outside of DOCCS facilities would have a glimpse into what has happened to them, their view of why officers went on strike, and what is happening as the strike comes to an end.

Here's what they said. These are quotes, edited for space, clarity, and to protect identities, but we have not substantively changed their words.

¹ Ransom, Jan. "Seven Prisoners Die as New York Guard Strikes Cause Widespread Disarray." The New York Times (March 4, 2025), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/04/nyregion/ny-prison-strike-guards.html>.

² Recover, Recruit, Rebuild: Governor Hochul Updates New Yorkers on Future of State's Correctional System Following End of Illegal Work Stoppage (Mar. 11, 2025), available at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/recover-recruit-rebuild-governor-hochul-updates-new-yorkers-future-states-correctional-system>.

³ Shanahan, Ed. "2,000 Striking N.Y. Prison Officers Fired and Barred From Public Jobs." The New York Times (March 11, 2025), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/11/nyregion/new-york-prison-strike-officers-fired.html>.

I. During the Height of the Illegal Strike

During the approximately three weeks that staff abandoned DOCCS facilities en masse, people in custody reported intolerable, unsafe conditions. Lack of staff to facilitate movement or deliver necessary services led to inadequate meals, lack of medical and mental health care, missed showers, and extreme isolation as people were locked in their cells for days on end, unable to receive visits or sometimes even get mail from their friends and family. DOCCS utterly failed in its obligation to keep the people in its custody safe and treat them with dignity during this time.

One person housed in a restrictive unit at Mid-State called our office and explained how DOCCS ignored even his most basic needs during the strike, forcing him to live in disturbing and even dangerous conditions for weeks, all while he faced reported harassment from the people he depends on to survive.

"We're still getting meals that are raw and hard to eat because they're too cold. Multiple times I've gotten bread with mold on it. I got rice with actual ice on it. Sometimes they don't bring meals at all. **I'm so hungry. They treat us like dogs in here,** ruthless, especially in the restrictive unit. We get no showers, no rec, locked in here for weeks with nothing. I'm in this cell and I stink. This is my worst experience in prison, these past weeks. I've been in prison a few times and this has been my worst bid ever. I have some medical problems and they don't care at all. I'm only getting some of my medication. Even in a mental health unit, where there are people with mental health problems, they don't even care. That's how bad it is here. Just last night I overheard a CO [correction officer] who just returned to work say he wanted to kill all the inmates and that we all deserved to die because of our criminal history. It isn't just the officers. Some National Guard members were harassing people in my unit. One specific person was sticking a broomstick into our cells and poking people and their stuff."

Another person, this one incarcerated at Attica, reported not only undignified and inhumane conditions, but exacerbation of his serious health problems as a result of the strikes, as well as fears about what would come next. He explained:

- "I have a blood clot in my right leg, and over the past few months I've developed chronic ulcers that require cleaning and dressing every three days. I got wound care two days before the strikes began, but then nothing—and my wound started to get infected. My leg is swollen and extremely painful, and the wound smells bad and is producing pus. When I finally got a new piece of gauze after days without care, I was not able to properly clean the area first. But it's more than denying us medical. **We've been locked in our cells for 10-11 days straight without recreation, programming, daily showers, and limited contact with our families.** I see COs lying on the news about what happens here. I've been here for four years and have not seen any of the things they're reporting happened. I'm not sure how long this will go on or what the long-term effects will be, but I know right now the people in my surroundings are trying to stay calm. **We're mostly just worried that we're going to be abused and mistreated when this all is over, that somehow this will all end up being our fault.**"

Yet another individual, this one housed at Marcy, described the terrible toll that being isolated in his cell day after day took on his mental health:

- "**Being trapped in my cell has been brutal for me.** I'm someone who gets claustrophobic. I've had some days where I'm just so stressed out that we're stuck in our cells for another day that I just lay in bed all day. I have no energy. I've been trying to force myself to get out of my bed each day whether it's reading or talking to other incarcerated individuals in cells near me. We only get the static tablet from 3pm-8pm, and outside of that time there's absolutely nothing to do. I had a family emergency at the beginning of the strike, but I can't even talk to my clinician about it."

These are only three of dozens of troubling reports that our office received as the strikes dragged on. We provide here a small sample of the stories we heard.

- "I have epilepsy and DOCCS is well-aware of it. Since the strike began, I've had multiple seizures and no medical care. I've told DOCCS staff each time I have the symptoms leading to a seizure, yet they still did not get me treatment or remove me from the environment that exacerbates symptoms and induces seizures. People with epilepsy are being stuck in cells like this and it puts tremendous stress on us, and increased stress leads to more seizures. It's a terrible cycle that DOCCS is making worse. **We don't have any movement, programs, recreation, sick call. I also haven't gotten fresh clothes, which is especially bad because I haven't been getting regular showers.** There are issues with the food, too. One day I got moldy, black potatoes with dinner. Even the staff agreed they looked weird."
—Person housed in mental health unit at Attica
- "I had open heart surgery in 2020. I have AFib, it makes me feel like I'm about to have a heart attack, and I'm just in my cell. **No one comes in to check on me.** I'm normally supposed to go to medical once a week, but that has stopped. I'm just hoping for the best. I was scheduled to see a cardiovascular surgeon last month, but that's on pause now, I have no idea what's going on. We haven't had showers during the strike, either."
—Person housed in general population at Attica
- "They're giving us cold food all day. **They aren't letting us out to go to recreation, no programming, no showers, no visits, no mail.** They hindered us from writing and reaching out to organizations."
—Person housed in protective custody at Attica
- "We can't get out of our cells, can't get rec, can't even clean up the cells we're stuck in. They're giving us the bare minimum of food: a scoop of rice, burgers with no bread just patties, etc. It's smaller food portions than usual and it isn't enough. I also need medical attention for some longstanding issues, definitely not getting it now. **They're also not giving me mental health meds consistently at all, which is making everything harder.**"
—Person housed in general population at Attica
- "I've been locked down for weeks. There is no sick call, recreation, programs, legal calls, legal visits, legal mail, or personal mail. My access to showers is limited at best. We get three cold meals a day, and the amount of food is not enough. **I'm hungry every day. I don't feel like people understand how hard this is not just on your body but your mind.** There was more movement here during the pandemic than there is now. It's just bizarre."
—Person housed in general population at Wyoming
- "There is no sick call, and they're not properly dealing with medical emergencies in my unit. I had chest pain and trouble breathing, and **they told me I couldn't see a medical professional because 'sick call isn't running.'** I kept pushing, and all I could get them to do is get a DOCCS staff member to take my blood pressure through my cell. **I have medical issues, and I can't get appointments for them.** They've also canceled physical therapy appointments I need, and mental health appointments. I have diagnosed mental illness, and depression and anxiety, which they know about and it doesn't matter. These strikes are absolutely making it worse. We don't have access to programs, out-of-cell time, or even a razor to shave."
—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Upstate
- "I was supposed to be released back to general population, but because of the strike they've withheld release from me and from other people too. They won't give us hot meals or bread, and several times when our trays get to us they're flipped upside down. I have a medical pass because of food allergies, but they keep giving me food that I'm allergic to and can't eat. I'm hungry. I'm also very concerned about my health. I have preexisting medical conditions that have long been ignored

prior to the strikes and I don't know how I'll get care for them now. I need to see a urologist, but that appointment was cancelled. I have nerve damage from frost bite on my feet because my cell was so cold. I have arthritis, and I am waiting on ultrasounds and CAT scans for stomach issues. **I just have to sit here in pain.** And mental health is a huge problem, too: I have anxiety and PTSD and the conditions and stress we're under from these strikes make it worse."
—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Cayuga

- "They left my unit unsupervised on one of those first nights of the strike. The officers turned off their body-worn cameras and walked out. It was terrifying. The next day, staff came back, gave everyone in the unit serious disciplinary tickets, and transferred me and others to a restrictive unit in another facility. I'd never gotten a ticket before. It not only messed up programs and privileges I had been working toward for a long time, but it could affect my release date. I want to get home to my son. **They are keeping us locked in for the entire day, denying us medical attention, not making sure people are OK.** I haven't gotten a clean shirt, pants, or underwear in a week. It's not right."
—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Gouverneur

- "In the beginning, **we went for days without enough food.** There were meals when we only got slices of bread. The facility says sick call is running, but no one in my unit has been able to go since the strikes began. **I haven't gotten the medications I'm supposed to have in two weeks.** I have one I can administer to myself, but I'm running out so I'm rationing it and it is not good. **I don't know what I'm going to do.** I also am supposed to have physical therapy to help me re-learn to walk, but that's deemed 'non-essential' so it's cancelled. It's really hard to make phone calls because counselors aren't coming around to add

permissible phone numbers, so it's hard to even advocate for ourselves. It's really isolating."
—Person housed in general population at Marcy

- "I got assaulted by a National Guard member who held me to a cell and slammed the door hatch onto my arm repeatedly. My arm is in tremendous pain, and it's bruised, swollen, and limp. They said they'd get me on a 'list' for an x-ray but that it might be weeks until I get one. They gave me one ibuprofen last night but then nothing, and I am hurting. I need pain meds. **I know that staff are not allowed to do the things they're doing, but I don't even know who to report things to.** I struggle with my mental health already, and we can't see our family, go to programs, we're just stuck all day in our little cages. I tried to talk to a mental health person but she only cared if I had a plan to kill myself. **I feel desperate.** In general we're not getting anything we're supposed to get and **we're just stuck in our cells with no help.**"
—Person housed in general population at Mid-State
- "A lot of the COs are still engaging in misconduct even with the cameras rolling. The officers who decided to stay, some of them have definitely been engaging in misconduct consistently. **A lot of that frustration and anger has been displaced towards the prisoner population.**"
—Person housed at Greene
- "I've been in my cell for the entire time this strike has been happening, and haven't had a single hot meal. There's nothing happening. **No recreation, no programs, just weeks in this cell with nothing.** No sick call, no mental health, no packages or mail from my family. I had one shower in a week. **I wish the public could understand what this is like.**"
—Person housed in general population at Auburn

- "I finally got appointments for severe pain in my shoulder and back, to figure out what's happening and for pain management. When the strikes started, I was told the appointments were suspended indefinitely. I'm in so much pain, just sitting here. They're not taking sick call, and we have no mental health help. We get one shower every 9 days, and it's been weeks of cold food. **Staff are doing this illegal action, and I'm just collateral damage.**"
—Person housed in general population at Coxsackie
- "A couple days into the strike, they gave me a piece of chicken that had re-frozen by the time it got to me. When I bit into it, half of my tooth chipped off. I have the piece of tooth with me and have been asking every day to go to the dentist to see if they can put it back together. I'm close to release and they didn't take me to a really important court date about my son. **I feel like it's going to affect what happens in that case and there's nothing I can do about it.** I haven't received any recreation. It's just me and a bunch of other people sitting in this dorm doing nothing. The strike has affected us mentally and physically by not moving at all."
—Person housed in general population at Cape Vincent
- "I lost my uncle last week, and I've been trying to talk to someone about the grief I feel but I can't get anyone. They're denying us access to courts and our attorneys, not allowing us to receive any mental health or medical appointments, depriving us access to grievance procedures, not releasing anybody from the box, not doing laundry or allowing cell cleanup, no educational cell study for the GED, no visits, no meetings ahead of parole hearings, no programs. **It's hard. It's not easy to go through something like this where you're locked inside a cell 24 hours a day. It adds a lot to a person's mental state and is oppressive.**"
—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Upstate
- "I can't get out of my cell and I can't see mental health and it's really weighing me down. **I feel like I'm deteriorating.** I've had one shower during this lockdown. There's no sick call, no mail, no hot food."
—Person housed in general population at Coxsackie
- "We're in lockdown. There are no showers, rec, programming, movement, visits. The food is all cold. I also think I have COVID but I can't get sick call. I've had symptoms for days but staff are ignoring my sick call slips and when I ask them about it. I've also had seizures during the strike, but haven't gotten the right care for any of them. They're denying us medical services, it's crazy. Realistically, it's dangerous for me because I'm in a cell by myself. When I have episodes out of nowhere I'm all alone, and denying medical is a serious matter. This whole thing they're doing is disrespectful and **they're playing with our lives in here.** The other day I must have been laying there for 20-30 minutes and no one saw me. I woke up in a lot of pain and no one even realized anything was happening until I yelled out after the fact. When I told a nurse about it, she told me to yell louder next time."
—Person housed in general population at Five Points
- "In the beginning, my problem was being locked in, lack of food, not being able to practice my religion. Then I got slashed in my face, 8 inches, from my earlobe down to my jaw. They glued it shut but I think I need Neosporin or something else to make sure it doesn't get infected. I've asked them to put me in protective custody but they won't. I keep asking."
—Person housed in general population at Sing Sing

II. Doubting Justifications for the Strike

Incarcerated people also reached out to our office to share how their experiences in prison had shaped their view of officers' decision to abandon their posts. People in custody frequently expressed frustration with officers' purported justifications for the illegal strike, explaining that officers' claims of increased violence since the passage of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement ("HALT") Act are not consistent with their lived experiences inside prison walls. Many also noted their fear of being hurt, or even killed, by officers since the killing of Robert Brooks, and the connection they saw between that incident and the strike which followed soon afterward. Here are some of their perspectives:

- "I understand officers being mad about forced 24-hour shifts or forced overtime but all the other stuff they're talking about is not happening the way they say it's happening. There is not excessive incarcerated individual on staff violence. I've been in nearly every maximum security facility and I've never seen the violence they're talking about. I've seen staff assaulting inmates because they don't like them or they assume they're a certain type of person, but I don't see the violence anywhere that they're striking about. **I was here in Marcy when the Marcy COs killed Robert Brooks.** Right after that is when the Governor's office came down and said they need to start wearing body cameras 24/7. And it just so happens that two months later you're going on strike trying to get rid of the HALT law. **Now they have to answer for what happened and be held accountable, and they don't want to be held accountable for their actions. That's what I believe the strike is truly about.**"

—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Marcy

- "Officers say HALT is bad, but it's really because it's beneficial to us. **Since HALT came into play, they never gave it a chance.** They don't want to respect that it's a new day. It used to be that corrections was about controlling you and beating you, but corrections now is about rehabilitation and the guards don't understand that—or maybe they don't want to. They're teaching the new officers the wrong way, they're brainwashing them. We watch the news and see what's going on and the things they're saying and it's just not true. Officers here allow and promote violence, they instigate violence and that's all a trick to get the numbers up to say it's gotten worse since HALT came into play. Now we hear all of them feeding these lies to the news, and the truth needs to be out there. These facilities had been violating HALT every day. To this day a lot of facilities still don't have congregate rec or programming, they didn't honor the protocol of HALT and it's just sad. Now they're screaming on the news that they're not in a safe environment, it's not a safe environment for them. **It's not a safe environment for us. For me the goal is just to make it home.**"

—Person housed in protective custody at Attica

- "I need the public to know that a lot of what staff say this strike is about is not accurate. There are more assaults on incarcerated individuals than on COs. They want to make the public believe that it's the other way around but that's not the case. Have there been attacks on officers? Absolutely. But a lot of them are provoked. And I don't say that to minimize what's happening but it's almost always incarcerated people striking back. I've heard on the news that they report that an officer is assaulted every 7 minutes. That is so not true. Officers sleep and snore at their posts, which they wouldn't do if they were actually scared for their lives. So I want

the public to know that a lot of the information out there is false or grossly exaggerated. **We're still in here fearing for our safety and fearing for our lives.** We're in more fear than the COs since we're the ones being murdered here, not the other way around."

—Person housed at Greene

- "Corrections officers seem to have switched the narrative to their dissatisfaction with the HALT Act, and what they're essentially saying is that their dissatisfaction justifies them taking drastic actions that plunges the state into darkness and chaos. Blaming the HALT Act is disingenuous. This is about the murder of Robert Brooks. What happened to him was only a glimpse of something I know all too well, of what happens behind the prison gates of DOCCS. **It's terrible that brutality is such common knowledge here. The normality of it is what is so dangerous.** What's going on right now is a sense of indignation on behalf of the officers: 'How dare you attempt to prosecute the officers for murdering Robert Brooks on camera.' That's really what's going on, let's not make a mistake."

—Person housed in general population at Wyoming

- "Officers for too long have been getting away with murder and it's all coming to light now. We don't want them to get whatever they want and for them to keep doing what they're doing to us. They say all we know how to do is act with violence but what about them? They just burned a transport bus.⁴ Who are really the violent people? **I just hope I can make it out of here alive and start my life over right.**"

—Person housed in general population at Attica



⁴ See Lyons, Brendan J. "Now you'll hear us: NY prison coach bus set on fire amid strike." The Times Union (February 22, 2025), available at <https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/prison-strike-eyed-motive-doccs-bus-set-fire-20181314.php>.

III. The Strike is Over in Name: What's Happening Now?

This report is being published following the Governor's declaration that the work stoppage is now over, about 2,000 DOCCS staff who did not report to work have been served termination notices, and the State will honor several key aspects of the various proposed agreements between the State and the union representing correctional officers.⁵ Despite this, the actual staffing levels at the facilities remain fluid and murky. Moreover, the announced end of the strike did not mean an end to danger, fear, and deprivation for people in DOCCS custody. They continued to report dangerous dysfunction and unacceptable living conditions. Many reported hostility or animosity from staff forced back to work, and feared further retaliation.

- **"They're saying on the news that the strike is over, hell no it's not!** There's nothing running normally here. They took us out to rec one time, in 20 days we went to rec one time, and that was days ago. **There are officers back, but it's not okay.** They're running showers inconsistently, here and there, they're still playing around with our food, just giving us anything. I broke one of my teeth and I've been complaining to medical, saying I need emergency dental and this tooth is driving me nuts. They just ask if I put in sick call. But the nerve is exposed, why can't they just bring me emergency dental like they should? If the National Guard is here, officers are here, why can't I go to dental? **It's scary, it feels dangerous here, there's a lot of tension and I'm absolutely afraid of retaliation.** People died. I talk to other people and

we honestly feel hunted. Officers, they're proving a point, they don't care about this job, they feel like they're above the law. There are officers walking around saying they got 'their own new HALT'. They're taking matters into their own hands, and there's no telling what can happen. **I've been here for 11 years and I'm just tired.**"

—Person housed in protective custody at Attica

- **"Some staff are back, but they're not doing what they're supposed to do. No one is moving and nothing is happening. The staff are retaliating, with lack of movement, with messing with our meals and packages.** And this comes after people being kept in their cells 24/7, preventing them from seeing other human beings, from exercising, from praying how they normally pray. **I know that may seem like little stuff to people on the outside, but those are big things to us.** They impact our lives a lot. And it isn't over."

—Person housed in general population at Attica
- **"There's still no striking COs back here. I'm still only seeing the military personnel around here, but I'm expecting nothing but hostility and animosity when the COs come back. They already treat us badly. Now that they're facing consequences and repercussions, now that their relatives and friends have been fired, it will be nothing but hostility and animosity.** And I'm honestly worried about how they're going to replace 2,000 employees. Are they going to send us people who aren't fully trained? It seems like there are going to be a lot of problems up ahead."

—Person housed in general population at Mid-State

⁵ See Recover, Recruit, Rebuild: Governor Hochul Updates New Yorkers on Future of State's Correctional System Following End of Illegal Work Stoppage (Mar. 11, 2025), available at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/recover-recruit-rebuild-governor-hochul-updates-new-yorkers-future-states-correctional-system>.

- “Even now that the strike is supposedly over, **they’re treating our medium security facility like a maximum security facility.** They’re also still messing up my medication access, which I have to take at specific times. And we’ve seen them write a ton of bogus tickets against people for being ‘out of place’ or making too much noise and ‘creating a disturbance.’ Those tickets matter, they affect our lives.”
—Person housed in general population at Marcy
- “They say the strike is over but I haven't seen any officers come back yet. I'm absolutely afraid of them coming back. **They were already neglecting us before and now it's gonna be worse because they did not get what they want.** I know they won't be happy so they'll just be doing the bare minimum until there's another riot. I'm just trying to maintain myself the best I can given the circumstances. **I still can't get the medical attention I need for a serious injury**—I can't lay on my side, my hand is going numb, and I need pain meds. And the food situation is not good. Yesterday I got pieces of bread that were soggy, moldy, and covered in white spots.”
From a second call days later: “People in my unit have been getting food poisoning. I've had serious stomach pain and have been throwing up, and I'm not the only one. There were white spots on the bologna they gave us. They're still giving us zero out of cell time except for this cage attached to the back of each cell.”
—Person housed in general population at Mid-State
- “**I haven't seen any changes in conditions from officers coming back to work.** The officers are definitely in their feelings about this whole situation. One of the main strike officers works in my unit and she's being very vindictive and banging on everyone's cells. She's just trying to get us to react. I'm worried. I am in real pain from an injury that happened before the strikes, and I've been waiting for them to take me for an MRI they ordered months ago. Now I don't even have adequate medication for the pain I'm in. I need to see someone. I also missed a court appearance I really needed to go to.”
—Person housed at Green Haven
- “There are quite a few staff now, after the strike, that are going out of their way to mess with people and antagonize them.”
—Person housed in a restrictive unit at Marcy
- “**The COs came back 2-3 days ago and they've been very hostile.** They've just been ignoring us or threatening us. I'd want the public to know that the prison is not safe for nobody because the COs aren't doing anything right now.”
—Person housed in general population at Attica
- “Most of the COs are back now **but they came back with a huge animosity towards us.** We didn't do anything to them, but we're the ones who are being punished right now and they've been harassing us incessantly. We don't have hot water, the food is still too cold to eat because it's practically frozen, and the meals are too small and don't fill us up. I'm hungry. **I'm also a mental health patient and haven't seen mental health staff since before the strike began.** It's taking a toll on my mental health and I don't feel right. I'm going through a lot and I'm trying not to fall off track. We are tired of this. Whatever the COs are going through, they're taking their anger out on us and bringing it back to us. They say we're the ones who are the animals and the savages, but they're the ones killing people in these prisons. I understand that most of us made wrong turns in life but I want to go home. I don't want to get killed in here. **I have kids and family to get home to, and a lot of us are starting to feel like our lives are in real danger here.**”
—Person housed in general population at Coxsackie
- “Staff are coming back but they still won't put me in protective custody after I was slashed.”
—Person housed in general population at Sing Sing

IV. New York Must Do Better

The stories that people in custody shared with our office make one thing very clear: it was incarcerated people, among the most vulnerable in our society, who paid the highest price for officers' decision to walk away from their jobs. New York has both a moral and a legal responsibility to the people it imprisons, who are entirely dependent on the State for their most basic needs, from food, to medical care, to their very survival. As the strike continues to wind down and officers return to their posts, DOCCS must prioritize the safety, health, and dignity of people in custody, and ensure that the deplorable conditions described above do not continue.

We call on the State of New York to:

1. Provide incarcerated people with access to medical and mental health care immediately.
2. Meet incarcerated people's basic needs such as sufficient food, clean clothing, and showers immediately.
3. Allow incarcerated people to communicate and visit with their friends, family, and attorneys immediately.
4. Protect incarcerated people from harassment, abuse, and violence by officers, including by establishing comprehensive camera coverage in all facilities, expanding use of body-worn cameras, and reforming the Office of Special Investigation complaint process to be more effective and timely.
5. Hold accountable all officers who engage in harassment, abuse, or violence against incarcerated people, including by referring serious use of force complaints to the New York State Office of the Inspector General, deeming any unreasonable use of force to be serious misconduct, and ensuring that officers who have committed serious misconduct face serious discipline, such as termination.
6. Comply with the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement ("HALT") Act, including by providing the required out-of-cell time, programming, and recreation; ensuring that people are not held in segregated confinement beyond 15 consecutive days or 20 days within a 60-day period; and ensuring that people with disabilities, people 21 or younger and 55 or over, and pregnant/post-partum people are not held in segregated confinement.