

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2016-2017**

June 15, 2017

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Speaker Carl E. Heastie
New York State Assembly LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
CHRISTIANA BEST-GIACOMINI

Re: HALT Solitary Confinement Act (A. 3080 / S. 4784)

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
ROY KEARSE

Dear Speaker Heastie:

THIRD VICE PRESIDENT
SHREYA MANDAL

First we would like to thank you for your steadfast support of the Raise the Age Legislation which recently became law in New York State. We are committed to a broad platform of social justice and criminal justice reform and appreciate your leadership on these issues.

SECRETARY
CHRISTINE H. FEWELL

TREASURER
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In New York prisons and jails, on any given day, thousands of people are held in isolated confinement in cells the size of an elevator for 22 to 24 hours a day, without meaningful human contact, programs, or therapy. The entire United Nations, including the United States, has concluded in the Mandela Rules that no person should be in solitary for more than *15 days*, because such confinement can amount to torture. Yet in New York people are routinely held in isolation for months and years, and sometimes even decades. The majority are placed there for non-violent rule violations.

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This extreme isolation can cause deep and permanent psychological and physical harm, and exacerbates, rather than addresses the underlying causes of difficult behavior. New Yorkers are regularly released directly from solitary confinement to the community. Even people particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of isolation, including youth and individuals with mental health needs, are held in solitary. This includes vulnerable people held in pre-trial detention, detained because they cannot afford the form and amount of bail set by the court.

**MSW STUDENT
MEMBER-AT-LARGE**
LAUREN M. BAHAR

The HALT Solitary Confinement Act would address the racially discriminatory infliction of discipline, end the torture of long-term solitary confinement beyond 15 days for all people, and create more humane and effective alternatives. HALT would require that any person separated from the general prison population for more than 15 consecutive days be placed in an alternative secure rehabilitative and therapeutic unit. HALT also restricts the criteria that can result in isolation, bars vulnerable populations from being placed in isolation, enhances staff training, and provides for procedural protections and outside oversight.

**BSW STUDENT
MEMBER-AT-LARGE**
RAMONA GROSS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JULI KEMPNER

New York has the opportunity to become a model for humane and effective change, while making our prisons, jails, and communities safer. We urge you to bring the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, A. 3080 / S. 4784, to the Assembly floor for a vote and pass HALT in the Assembly this legislative session. HALT is the only bill that will end the torture of solitary for all people, and we fully support its passage. A majority of Assembly Members now support HALT (including 68 co-sponsors of the bill and an additional 8 legislators who have committed to vote for it).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juli Kempner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juli Kempner, Esq., LMSW
Executive Director

cc: Assembly member David I. Weprin
Chair, Committee on Correction
LOB 526
Albany, NY 12248