

**New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
Minute in Support of the proposed  
Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT)  
Solitary Confinement Act (A.4401/S.2659)**

Quakers have a history of involvement in the correctional facilities in New York State. In the 1970's, Friends helped to develop the Alternatives to Violence Project at the request of men from the Greenhaven Correctional Facility. Many members of the NY Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends continue to volunteer with this program, which is active in 15 correctional facilities in New York. In addition, we maintain Quaker Worship Groups in 8 correctional facilities. Our involvement confirms our belief that positive interactions and programming support constructive change. The training and programs proposed in the HALT Bill have the potential, we believe, to be far more effective ways to change behavior and make prisons safer for both the incarcerated and members of staff than our current use of solitary confinement.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has a strong belief in the possibility of positive transformation within each person and a strong belief in non-violence. The way we treat people affects their ability to connect with that of God within. The use of solitary confinement has nothing to do with the original crime and creates permanent psychological and physical injury. Incarcerated men, women and youth are then less able to make positive changes. They are more likely to suffer psychological damage, and they become more of a risk to themselves, to Corrections Officers, and when released, to the public. Research on the effects of solitary confinement confirms this. We have come to understand as Friends that violence may be psychological and emotional, not just physical. We feel that solitary confinement as it is currently employed in NY State is a form of torture and must be stopped.

Acknowledging these circumstances, Friends are led to approve the following minute:

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls on Governor Cuomo to support the reform of the practice of solitary confinement in the state correctional facilities and local jails of New York, as developed in the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, Bill #A4401/S2659. With the enactment of the changes in the use of solitary confinement proposed in the Act, New York would become a leader in the effort to stop human rights abuses in the United States.