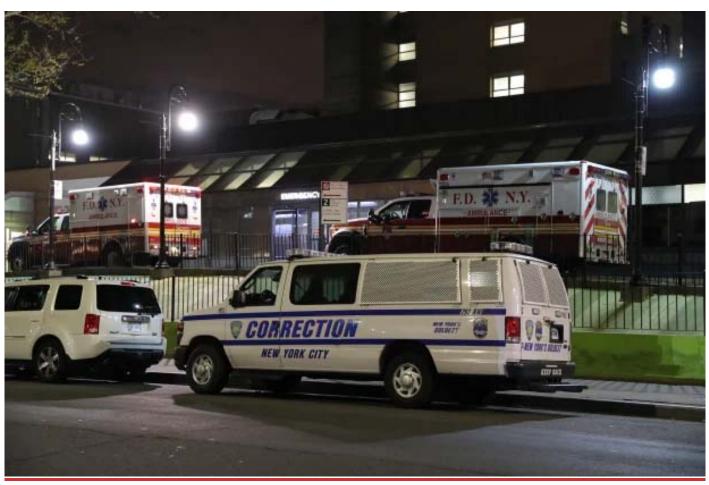METRO

Cuomo orders 1,100 parole violators released from jails over coronavirus concerns

By Bernadette Hogan   March 27, 2020 | 9:53pm | Updated

A Corrections van outside the emergency room entrance of Elmhurst Hospital in 2018.
William C. Lopez

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ALBANY — Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered the release of 1,100 parole violators across the state Friday, citing concerns over inmates contracting the coronavirus.

"We're releasing people who are in jails because they violated parole for non-serious reasons," Cuomo said Friday night in an MSNBC interview.

"And wherever we can get people out of jails, out of prisons, now, we are."

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision was directed to start springing up to 400 inmates in New York City and 700 across the rest of the state — all currently behind bars in local jails for low-level technical violations, the agency said in a statement.

People held in local jails on parole warrants for alleged violations include those who may have tested positive on drug tests, failed to report

to their parole office as scheduled, or didn't report a change in residence to their parole officer.

"Following an individualized review, the Department began canceling any warrant where the individual has identified adequate housing is available and the release of the individual does not present an undue risk to public safety," the agency said in a statement.

"This significant action is being taken in response to a growing number of COVID-19 cases in local jails over the past few days and weeks."

"Our top priority remains the public health and safety of New Yorkers during this global public health emergency and this measure will further protect a vulnerable population from contracting and transmitting this infectious disease," DOCCS added.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio pledged earlier this week to release 300 inmates serving less than year-long sentences for misdemeanors or non-violent felonies on Rikers Island.

He said there's also plans to release hundreds more in other city facilities.

Advocates have been calling on city and state officials to release prisoners in light of COVID-19's spread.

As of Friday, DOCCS recorded 65 out of 29,000 employees with confirmed coronavirus cases.

The agency also said five out of 43,000 incarcerated individuals tested positive for COVID-19 in addition to two out of 35,000 parolees under supervision.

The Empire State recorded 44,635 positive coronavirus cases statewide Friday, and 519 deaths.

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